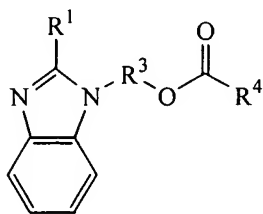


AMENDED CLAIM SET:

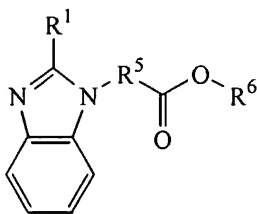
1. (cancelled).

2. (currently amended) A positive-working resist composition comprising:

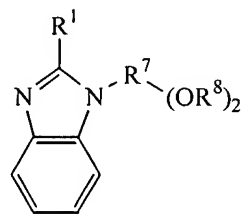
(A) at least one basic compound having a benzimidazole skeleton and a polar functional group, represented by the general formulae (2) to (7):



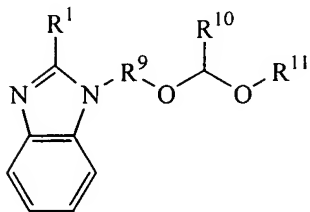
(2)



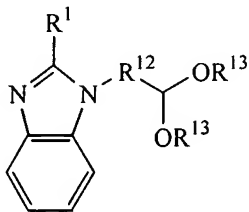
(3)



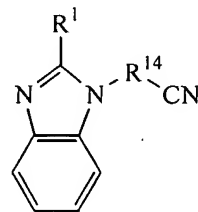
(4)



(5)



(6)



(7)

wherein R¹ is a hydrogen atom, a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, an aryl group of 6 to 10 carbon atoms, or an aralkyl group of 7 to 10 carbon atoms;

R³, R⁵, R⁹, R¹² and R¹⁴ are each independently a straight, branched or cyclic alkylene group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms;

R⁴ is a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group of 1 to 15 carbon atoms which may contain at least one group selected from among hydroxyl, carbonyl, ester, ether, sulfide, carbonate, cyano and acetal groups;

R^6 is an alkyl group of 1 to 15 carbon atoms which may contain at least one group selected from among hydroxyl, carbonyl, ester, ether, sulfide, carbonate, cyano and acetal groups;

R^7 is a trivalent, straight, branched or cyclic hydrocarbon group of 2 to 10 carbon atoms;

R^8 is each independently an acyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms which may contain at least one ester or ether group, or two R^8 may bond together to form a cyclic carbonate or cyclic acetal;

R^{10} is a hydrogen atom or a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms;

R^{11} is a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms which may contain at least one group selected from among ether, sulfide and acetal groups, or R^{10} and R^{11} may bond together to form a ring;

R^{13} is a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, or two R^{13} may bond together to form a ring;

(B) an organic solvent;

(C) a base resin having an acid labile group-protected acidic functional group which is alkali-insoluble or substantially alkali-insoluble, but becomes alkali-soluble when the acid labile group is eliminated; and

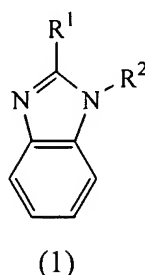
(D) a photoacid generator.

3. (cancelled).

4. (original) The positive resist composition of claim 3 which further comprises (E) a dissolution inhibitor.

5. (currently amended) A negative-working resist composition comprising:

(A) ~~the basic compound of claim 1~~ at least one basic compound having a benzimidazole skeleton and a polar functional group, represented by the general formula (1):



wherein R¹ is a hydrogen atom, a straight, branched, or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, an aryl group of 6 to 10 carbon atoms, or an aralkyl group of 7 to 10 carbon atoms; and R² is a polar functional group-bearing straight, branched, or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms wherein said alkyl group contains as the polar functional group at least one group selected from among ester, acetal, and cyano groups, and optionally at least one group selected from among hydroxyl, carbonyl, ether, sulfide, and carbonate groups;

(B) an organic solvent;

(C') a base resin which is alkali-soluble, but becomes substantially alkali-insoluble when crosslinked with a crosslinking agent;

(D) a photoacid generator; and

(F) a crosslinking agent which induces crosslinkage under the action of an acid.

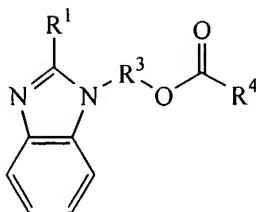
6. (withdrawn) A patterning process comprising the steps of:

- (1) applying the positive resist composition of claim 3 onto a substrate;
- (2) heat treating the applied resist, then exposing the heat-treated resist through a photomask to high-energy radiation having a wavelength of at most 300 nm or an electron beam; and
- (3) heat treating the exposed resist, then developing the resist with a liquid developer.

7. (withdrawn) A patterning process comprising the steps of:

- (1) applying the negative resist composition of claim 5 onto a substrate;
- (2) heat treating the applied resist, then exposing the heat-treated resist through a photomask to high-energy radiation having a wavelength of at most 300 nm or an electron beam; and
- (3) heat treating the exposed resist, then developing the resist with a liquid developer.

8. (withdrawn) A basic compound represented by the general formula (2):



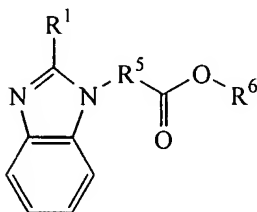
(2)

wherein R¹ is a hydrogen atom, a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, an aryl group of 6 to 10 carbon atoms, or an aralkyl group of 7 to 10 carbon atoms;

R³ is a straight, branched or cyclic alkylene group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms; and

R⁴ is a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group of 1 to 15 carbon atoms which may contain at least one group selected from among hydroxyl, carbonyl, ester, ether, sulfide, carbonate, cyano and acetal groups.

9. (withdrawn) A basic compound represented by the general formula (3):

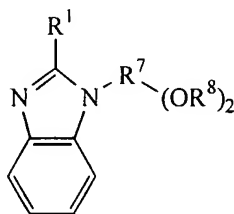


(3)

wherein R¹ is a hydrogen atom, a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, an aryl group of 6 to 10 carbon atoms, or an aralkyl group of 7 to 10 carbon atoms;

R^5 is a straight, branched or cyclic alkylene group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms; and R^6 is an alkyl group of 1 to 15 carbon atoms which may contain at least one group selected from among hydroxyl, carbonyl, ester, ether, sulfide, carbonate, cyano and acetal groups.

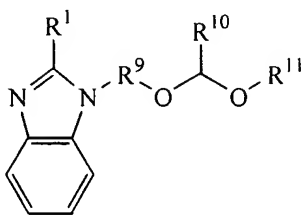
10. (withdrawn) A basic compound represented by the general formula (4):



(4)

wherein R^1 is a hydrogen atom, a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, an aryl group of 6 to 10 carbon atoms, or an aralkyl group of 7 to 10 carbon atoms; R^7 is a trivalent, straight, branched or cyclic hydrocarbon group of 2 to 10 carbon atoms; and R^8 is each independently an acyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms which may contain at least one ester or ether group, or two R^8 may bond together to form a cyclic carbonate or cyclic acetal.

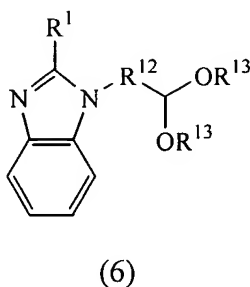
11. (withdrawn) A basic compound represented by the general formula (5):



(5)

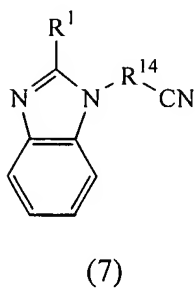
wherein R^1 is a hydrogen atom, a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, an aryl group of 6 to 10 carbon atoms, or an aralkyl group of 7 to 10 carbon atoms; R^9 is a straight, branched or cyclic alkylene group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms; R^{10} is a hydrogen atom or a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms; R^{11} is a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms which may contain at least one group selected from among ether, sulfide and acetal groups, or R^{10} and R^{11} may bond together to form a ring.

12. (withdrawn) A basic compound represented by the general formula (6):



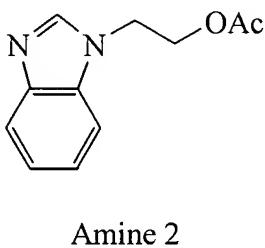
wherein R^1 is a hydrogen atom, a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, an aryl group of 6 to 10 carbon atoms, or an aralkyl group of 7 to 10 carbon atoms; R^{12} is a straight, branched or cyclic alkylene group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms; and R^{13} is a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, or two R^{13} may bond together to form a ring.

13. (withdrawn) A basic compound represented by the general formula (7):



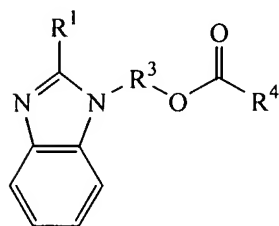
wherein R¹ is a hydrogen atom, a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, an aryl group of 6 to 10 carbon atoms, or an aralkyl group of 7 to 10 carbon atoms; and R¹⁴ is a straight, branched or cyclic alkylene group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms.

14. (withdrawn) A compound of the formula:

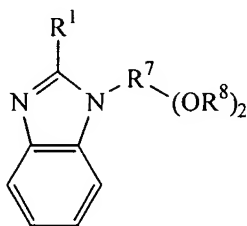


15. (withdrawn) A resist composition comprising the compound of claim 14.

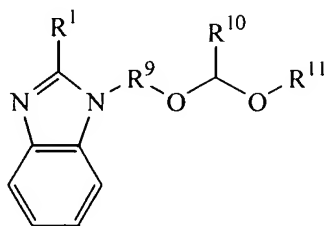
16. (currently amended) The resist composition of claim 2, [[1]] wherein the basic compound is at least one selected from the group consisting of compounds represented by the following general formulae:



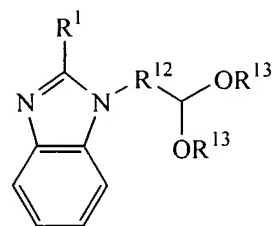
(2)



(4)



(5)



(6)

wherein R¹ is a hydrogen atom, methyl group or phenyl group; R³, R⁹, and R¹² are each independently a straight, branched or cyclic alkylene group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms; R⁴ is a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group of 1 to 15 carbon atoms which may contain at least one group selected from among hydroxyl, carbonyl, ester, ether, sulfide, carbonate, cyano and acetal groups; R⁷ is a trivalent, straight, branched or cyclic hydrocarbon group of 2 to 10 carbon atoms; R⁸ is each independently an acyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms which may contain at least one ester or ether group, or two R⁸ may bond together to form a cyclic carbonate or cyclic acetal; R¹⁰ is a hydrogen atom or a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms; R¹¹ is a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms which may contain at least one group selected from among ether, sulfide and acetal groups, or R¹⁰ and R¹¹ may bond together to form a ring; and R¹³ is a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, or two R¹³ may bond together to form a ring.